



POST-CIVIL WAR: REGIONAL SHIFTS IN U.S. POPULATION BY AGE AND SEX

TEACHER VERSION

Subject Level:

High School History

Grade Level:

9-10

Approx. Time Required:

60 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to compare and analyze population pyramids of 1850-1870 census data for different races/ethnicities and for U.S. states and territories.
- Students will be able to use data from population pyramids to draw connections between the Civil War and western migration.

Activity Description

Students will examine population pyramids of 1850–1870 census data for different races/ethnicities and for the states and territories. Then they will compare these data to understand how the Civil War and western migration affected the composition of the U.S. population.

Suggested Grade Level:

9–10

Approximate Time Required:

60 minutes

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Topics:

- The Civil War
- Population change
- Western migration

Skills Taught:

- Comparing and contrasting
 - Making inferences
 - Reading and analyzing population pyramids
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Materials Required

- The student version of this activity, 4 pages
- A computer with Internet access for each student
- Teacher computer with Internet access and a projector to display web sites

Activity Item

This activity uses the following online tool:

- Charts Showing the Distribution by Age and Sex of the Population of the United States: 1850–1870
www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/workspace/handleMediaPlayer?qvq=&trs=&mi=&lunaMediaId=RUMSEY~8~1-29196~1130256

For more information to help you introduce your students to the U.S. Census Bureau, read "[Census Bureau 101 for Students](#)." This information sheet can be printed and passed out to your students as well.

Standards Addressed

See charts below. For more information, read

"[Overview of Education Standards and Guidelines Addressed in Statistics in Schools Activities](#)."

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Standard	Strand	Cluster
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.	RH 9–10 – History/ Social Studies	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

UCLA National Standards for History: U.S. History Content Standards

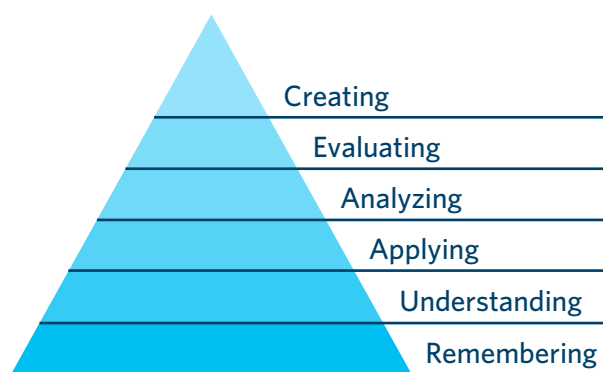
Era	Standard
5 – Civil War and Reconstruction (1850–1877)	Standard 2: The course and character of the Civil War and its effects on the American people

UCLA National Standards for History: Historical Thinking Standards

Standard	Description
Standard 1: Chronological Thinking	Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration. Students will analyze population pyramids to explain shifts in the U.S. population that occurred as a result of western migration and the Civil War.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Students will **analyze** census data to draw conclusions about the impact of the Civil War and western migration on shifts in the U.S. population.



Teacher Notes

Before the Activity

Students must understand the following key terms:

- **Domestic** – of, relating to, or made in one’s own country
- **Domestic migration** – population movement within the borders of a country
- **Immigration** – movement of people from one country into a destination country
- **Population pyramid** – an infographic that uses a pyramid shape to show the distribution of age groups by sex in a population

Students should have a basic understanding of the following ideas and concepts:

- The Civil War (1861–1865) and its impact on the population
- Other major events in U.S. history that occurred roughly between 1800 and 1870

Teachers should lead a class discussion about the factors that affect population change, referring to examples such as natural disasters, wars, climate change, the availability of resources, and the state of the economy.

During the Activity

Teachers should review and discuss with students the background information about the 1870 Census in part 1.

In part 2, teachers should project the tool on the screen, navigating to the charts by clicking “Open Media in Full View.” Teachers should let students know that they can move the slider (or click the plus and minus buttons) on their own screens to zoom in and out and that they can click and drag to move around the document.

Once students answer question 2 in part 2, teachers should show them how to read the population pyramids, noting that data for men appear on the left and data for women appear on the right of the center lines. Teachers should also note that each horizontal line represents a decade in a person’s life and that those decades are shown on the right side of the document. Then teachers should explain that the number to the left or right side of each pyramid is the number, in thousands, of men or women who were alive in each life decade during 1850, 1860, and 1870. For example, when looking at the pyramid for the white population in 1870, students can see that there were 134,000 boys and 130,000 girls between ages 0 and 10.

Students should also be aware that the sex with the larger population for all decades of life is shaded in each population pyramid — except for the pyramids for Pennsylvania (which should be shaded on the left side) and Maine (which has equal populations for both sexes).

After the Activity

Teachers could use an exit slip — which requires students to write responses to questions posed at the end of class to reflect on what they have learned — to ask students questions such as:

- What did you learn that confirmed what you already knew about this period of U.S. history?
- What surprised you about the population shifts you observed in different U.S. regions during this historical period?
- What was the impact of the Civil War on population change, specifically in relation to age groups?
- Why is it important to understand how a historical event affects a population?

Extension Idea

Teachers could use other Statistics in Schools activities about similar topics to build on this activity.

Student Activity

Click [here](#) to download a printable version for students.

Activity Item

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Student Learning Objectives

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Part 1 – Learn About the 1870 Census

Authorizing Legislation

The 1870 Census was conducted under the authority of the Census Act of 1850. A new law, approved on May 6, 1870, called for two procedural changes: The marshals were to submit the returns from the population questionnaire to the U.S. Census Bureau by Sept. 10, 1870; all other questionnaires were due by Oct. 1, 1870. Additionally, penalties for refusing to reply to enumerator inquiries were expanded to cover all questions asked on all questionnaires.

Enumeration

After the Civil War, the decennial census questionnaires were reordered and redesigned to account for the discontinuation of the “slave questionnaire.” The schedules for the 1870 Census were “general population,” “mortality,” “agriculture,” “products of industry,” and “social statistics.”

The secretary of Interior selected Gen. Francis A. Walker as superintendent of the ninth census on Feb. 7, 1870. At the time of his appointment, Walker was chief of the Bureau of Statistics — an agency within the U.S. Treasury Department — and was one of several experts who had participated in the U.S. House of Representatives’ committee deliberations about the 1870 Census. A capable administrator, Walker introduced examinations to test the qualifications of those applying for positions with the Census Bureau. Walker remained as superintendent until November 1871, when Congress’ failure to appropriate funds for his salary caused him to resign. Nevertheless, he continued overseeing census work as commissioner of Indian affairs. Later, he resumed his duties as superintendent of the census, working without compensation.

The 1870 enumeration was completed by Aug. 23, 1871.

Technological Advancement

By 1870, the job of tallying and tabulating questionnaire responses was becoming overly burdensome for the Census Bureau. This problem was partially alleviated by the use of a rudimentary tallying machine.

Part 2 – Discuss and Analyze Census Data

1. What major domestic events happened in the 20 to 30 years before the 1870 Census? How might these historical events have affected the distribution of the U.S. population in 1870?

Student answers will vary but could include western migration, immigration, the Civil War, the Gold Rush, and the Compromise of 1850.

2. Now navigate to the online tool using the URL at the top of this activity, and follow along as your teacher briefly reviews how to interact with the document on the screen. What data do these population pyramids show? What information appears on the left and right sides of the pyramids? What do the horizontal lines in each pyramid represent?

The pyramids show the numbers of people (male and female) and their age groups, categorized by race/ethnicity for 1850, 1860, and 1870 and by U.S. state/territory for just 1870. The male population is shown on the left side of each pyramid, and the female population is shown on the right. Each horizontal line represents an age group.

3. Look at the three aggregate population pyramids for 1850, 1860, and 1870 in the top section of the document. Do the data align with your expectations? Why or why not? Explain what historical events may have contributed to any patterns you see in the population distributions.

Student answers will vary but could include surprise that there were still more men than women in 1870, given that many men died during the Civil War.

4. Which 1870 population pyramids in the top section surprise you? Why do you think some pyramids show such stark differences in their data?

Student answers will vary but could include the large population of young Chinese men in 1870 compared with other age groups in that pyramid, which could be explained by increased immigration.

5. Why do you think the number of population pyramids increases with each year of census data in this section? What does this say about the makeup of the U.S. population?

Student answers will vary but could include that more people were immigrating to the United States, so the population was becoming more diverse. Students could also say that, in later years, the Census Bureau made more of an effort to count minority populations as the makeup of the United States changed.

6. Next, look at the pyramids in the bottom section of the document. In terms of overall trends, how do the male and female populations of the southern states and territories (such as Alabama and Tennessee) compare? Which age groups in those states show the greatest differences between men and women?

Overall, there were more women than men in the southern states, especially at ages 10–20, 20–30, and 30–40.

7. Still looking for overall trends in this section, how do the male and female populations of the northern states (such as New York and Massachusetts) compare? Which age groups in those states show the greatest differences between men and women?

Overall, there were more women than men in the northern states, especially at ages 10–20, 20–30, and 30–40.

8. What historical factors from the previous decade, 1860–1869, may have contributed to the differences between men and women that you noted in questions 6 and 7? Explain.

Student answers will vary but could include an explanation that some men in their teens, 20s, and 30s moved west of the Mississippi River, attracted by opportunities to find gold or to farm using slave labor. In addition, many men in these age groups fought and died during the Civil War. For these reasons, it makes sense that the female populations for these age ranges were larger in 1870.

9. Review the population pyramids for two western states or territories in this section and explain any patterns you see. What historical events may have contributed to those patterns?

Student answers will vary but could include that the pyramids for western states show a significant majority of men, especially at ages 10–20, 20–30, and 30–40. Historical explanations could include western migration and the Gold Rush.

10. Summarize the impact of the Civil War and western migration on the U.S. population distribution in 1870, using trends apparent in the population pyramids to support your answer.

Student answers will vary but could include: The larger female population in northern and southern states in 1870 could be explained by the loss of many men during the Civil War. The western migration could explain the significant numbers of young and middle-aged men in western states in 1870.